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FM AMEMBASSY RABAT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9794
INFO RUCNMGH/MAGHREB COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHBP/AMEMBASSY BAMAKO PRIORITY 0123
RUEHDK/AMEMBASSY DAKAR PRIORITY 0486
RUEHPG/AMEMBASSY PRAGUE PRIORITY 0242
RUEHRO/AMEMBASSY ROME PRIORITY 1628
RUEHTV/AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV PRIORITY 3564
RUEHTRO/AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI PRIORITY 0420
RUEHDS/USMISSION ADDIS ABABA PRIORITY
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS PRIORITY

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 RABAT 000207

SIPDIS
NOFORN

STATE FOR AF/W AND NEA/MAG

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/16/2019
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [MO](#) [AL](#) [MR](#)
SUBJECT: UNOFFICIAL REQUEST FROM MAURITANIAN HCE FOR U.S.
ENGAGEMENT

REF: RABAT 0165

RABAT 00000207 001.3 OF 002

Classified By: CDA Robert P. Jackson for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (S/NF) Summary: The Foreign Minister of the Mauritanian High Council of State (HCE or junta), passed us indirectly a personal "non-paper," urging the USG to pursue "principled engagement" with the HCE. Continuing the effort to communicate via alternative channels noted in reftel, a senior Moroccan diplomat conveyed the previously promised unsigned non-paper, in both hard and electronic form. The non-paper articulately relates the background of the coup and the HCE's post-coup efforts to move towards democratic elections in June, with the likely participation of a retired General Ould Abdel Aziz, who would promote moderation, regional cohesion and security. The non-paper describes a public exchange between Secretary Clinton and Mauritania's Foreign Minister at Sharm el-Sheikh as positive, and seeks more contact outside Nouakchott. It claims that better relations are in the U.S. interest, citing the junta's earlier good relations with Israel. The substance of the six-page non-paper, which although unofficial, is marked confidential, is summarized below, and the full text has been emailed to Department (NEA/MAG). End summary.

12. (S/NF) Abdellatif Bendahane (strictly protect), Director of African Affairs at Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation (MFA), passed to A/DCM this non-paper promised after the secret visit of HCE Foreign Minister, Dr. Mohammad-Mahmoud Ould Mamedou, to Morocco in February 2009 (reftel). Bendahane said the paper was written by Mamedou, who told him that he wanted it conveyed as an unofficial communication, which he, Bendahane, was unofficially forwarding. Bendahane indicated that Director General for Studies and Documentation (external intelligence or DGED) Yassine Mansouri, who has led Moroccan policy on Mauritania was aware and in accord with the message and his passing it, but he equally stressed that this was not an official communication from either government, and his own minister remained unaware of the channel. Pressed for background, Bendahane insisted that Morocco had no foreknowledge of the coup but acknowledged that the country had been concerned about a growing Algerian role under President Abdellahi.

Non-Paper: The HCE Seeks U.S.

13. (S/NF) Calling the public meeting between Secretary Clinton and Mauritania's Foreign Minister at the Gaza reconstruction meeting in Sharm el-Sheikh "positive," the non-paper notes HCE wanted a deepening of ties and "principled engagement" with the U.S. prior to the Mauritanian elections scheduled for June 2009, according to the statement.

14. (S/NF) Engagement with the military regime is in the long-term security interests of the United States, it argues, emphasizing the desire of the HCE to be a force for balance and moderation, based on Morocco's approach. Mauritania is a "strategically key country with moderate past and significant potential," it says, asserting that the policies of the Bush Administration had alienated Nouakchott and were out-of-step with the approach taken by Mauritania's neighbors, other states in the region, and other Western governments. The policies of the former Administration pushed Mauritania to break off ties with Israel and engage with Iran, which contradicts the moderate approach that the government seeks to follow, and is "not what the young modernizers of this team wanted," it says. It indicates that Abdel Aziz would likely run for president in the June 6 elections, after resigning from the military, and projects that his presidency would be good for regional cohesion and security. It maintains that the Community of Sahel-Saharan States (Note: A sub-regional group which includes Morocco and recently had its Ministerial here) had agreed to observe the June 6 elections.

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Not a Power Grab, a "Rectification"

15. (S/NF) The document espouses the HCE's commitment to democratic elections in June and acknowledges the unconstitutional nature of the coup in Mauritania, which removed the first democratically elected President, Sidi Mohamed Ould Cheikh Abdallahi. However, it argues that the coup "is objectively a particular case" and should be viewed as a "rectification" of the mismanagement of President Abdallahi rather than as a traditional power grab. The statement asserts that since the coup, the HCE has gained popular support and has demonstrated its commitment to moderation by ensuring civil liberties, freedom of the press, and tolerance of opposition groups.

16. (C) Comment: We have no reason to doubt the authenticity of the communication. The full text of the non-paper has been emailed to NEA/MAG.

17. (U) Tripoli Minimize Considered.

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<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/nea/rabat>

Jackson